DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 465 470 PS 030 469

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TITLE What Happens When the School Year Is Over? The Use and Costs of Child Care for School-Age Children during the Summer Months. Occasional Paper. Assessing the New Federalism: An Urban Program To Assess Changing Social Politics.
INSTITUTION Urban Inst., Washington, DC.; Child Trends, Inc., Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Chicago, IL.; Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD.; Kellogg Foundation, Battle Creek, MI.; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Princeton, NJ.; Kaiser Foundation, Oakland, CA.; Ford Foundation, New York, NY.; David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Los Altos, CA.; Mott (C.S.) Foundation, Flint, MI.; McKnight Foundation, Minneapolis, MN.; Commonwealth Fund, New York, NY.; Weingart Foundation, Los Angeles, CA.; Fund for New Jersey, East Orange.; Joyce Foundation, Chicago, IL.; Rockefeller Foundation, New York, NY.
PUB DATE 2002-06-00
NOTE 45p.
AVAILABLE FROM Urban Institute, 2100 M Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037. Tel: 202-833-7200; Fax: 202-429-0687; e-mail: paffairs@ui.urban.org. For full text: http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310497 OP58.pdf.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Advantaged; Child Care; Child Caregivers; *Children; Economically Disadvantaged; Elementary Education; *Employed Parents; Latchkey Children; Low Income; *Summer Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Child Care Costs; *Summer

ABSTRACT

This study examined child care patterns during the summer months among 6- to 12-year-old children with employed parents or primary caretakers. Using interview data from the 1999 National Survey of Americas Families, the study analyzed two key aspects of summer child care: the types of arrangements for school-age children and the amount families with school-age children spend on child care. The study divided child care arrangements into three categories: supervised arrangements, self-care, and parent/other (e.g., parents working at home, or use of lessons, clubs or other activities not usually thought of as childcare). Data showed both the percentage of families using each kind of care and the time spent in child care. Arrangements were considered for children ages 6 to 9 and 10 to 12. Data on arrangements and costs were also disaggregated by family income. The study found that nearly three-quarters of all school-age children with employed primary caretakers are in supervised child care during the summer. The summer months see a large increase in care by relatives and in the time spent in organized care. Average summer child care expenses for higher-income families were found to be more than twice the average spent by lower-income families. One surprising finding is that low-income families spend less on child care during the summer than during the school year. Based on the findings, it was recommended that policymakers be aware of seasonal patterns

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of child care and evaluate summer child care programs. Three appendices provide tabular data. (KK)

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This paper is part of the Urban Institute's *Assessing the New Federalism* project, a multiyear project to monitor and assess the devolution of social programs from the federal to the state and local levels. Alan Weil is the project director. The project analyzes changes in income support, social services, and health programs. In collaboration with Child Trends, the project studies child and family well-being.

This paper has received direct funding from The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The *Assessing the New Federalism* project is supported by The Annie E. Casey Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, The McKnight Foundation, The Commonwealth Fund, the Stuart Foundation, the Weingart Foundation, The Fund for New Jersey, The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, and The Rockefeller Foundation.

The nonpartisan Urban Institute publishes studies, reports, and books on timely topics worthy of public consideration. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

The authors wish to thank Gina Adams, Alan Weil, Monica Rohacek, Gary Gates, Linda Giannarelli, Duncan Chaplin, Kathryn Tout, Jason Ost, Karen Tvedt, Beth Miller, and Freya Sonenstein for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. The authors especially thank Stefanie Schmidt and Natalya Bolshun for their contributions to the paper and for their role in preparing the data for analysis, as well as Fritz Scheuren for his assistance with the weighting of the data.

About the Series

Assessing the New Federalism is a multiyear Urban Institute project designed to analyze the devolution of responsibility for social programs from the federal government to the states, focusing primarily on health care, income security, employment and training programs, and social services. Researchers monitor program changes and fiscal developments. In collaboration with Child Trends, the project studies changes in family well-being. The project aims to provide timely, nonpartisan information to inform public debate and to help state and local decisionmakers carry out their new responsibilities more effectively.

Key components of the project include a household survey, studies of policies in 13 states, and a database with information on all states and the District of Columbia, available at the Urban Institute's web site (http://www.urban.org). This paper is one in a series of occasional papers analyzing information from these and other sources.

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What Happens When the School Year Is Over? The Use and Costs of Child Care for School-Age Children during the Summer Months

Introduction

Every year, millions of American families undertake the task of arranging child care for their school-age children. During the school year, this task primarily involves finding one or more regular child care arrangements to supplement the hours that children spend in school. For most families, these arrangements bridge a gap in care that occurs when parents work longer hours than their children are in school or work outside their children's school schedule. To fill this gap, parents often choose supervised arrangements—such as before- and/or after-school programs, family child care homes, nannies, baby-sitters, or relatives—but they may also choose to leave children to care for themselves (Capizzano, Tout, and Adams 2000).

While it is clear that the task of arranging child care changes substantially during the summer, little research has been done to examine child care patterns during this part of the year. For example, little is known about how the end of the school year affects the types of child care families use, the number of hours children are in care, or the amount families spend on child care. In addition, little is known about the extent to which families with school-age children use programs available only during the summer—organized summer programs, recreational programs, and day camps—or the extent to which school-age children are regularly without adult supervision during the summer months.

Understanding these summer child care patterns is critical, because the types of care used during the summer and the costs of child care can affect the well-being of children and families. The child care arrangements parents use during the summer can keep their children safe and support their social and academic well-being, or they can put children at risk of physical or emotional harm.[1] From the parents' perspective, the need for additional child care caused by the end of the school year can create stress in trying to find new child care arrangements and can potentially affect employment patterns and how much families spend on care. Therefore, it is important for policymakers and researchers concerned about family employment patterns and child development to gain a better understanding of summer child care patterns.

This paper provides one of the first systematic examinations of child care patterns among 6- to 12-year-old children during the summer months (see also Hofferth et al. 1991). Using the 1999 National Survey of America's Families, the paper analyzes

two key aspects of summer child care: the types of arrangements used for school-age children while their primary caretaker is working and the amount families with school-age children spend on child care. Where possible, we look at these aspects of child care separately for children of different ages and for children from families with different incomes.

Data and Methods

The Data

To analyze summer child care arrangements and expenses, we use data from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF).[2] Between February and October 1999, the NSAF collected child care information on a nationally representative sample of children under 13. For randomly selected "focal" children in the sample households, interviews were conducted with their primary caretaker, usually a parent, about the "regular" child care arrangements used in the past month and the hours spent in each arrangement.[3] Regular arrangements were defined as those used "at least once a week in the past month."

In order to analyze school-year and summer child care arrangements separately, the NSAF also collected data from a nationally representative subsample of families during the months that school was not in session for most children.[4] These families, which comprise the "summer" sample discussed in this paper, were interviewed between June and September 1999 about their regular child care arrangements in the past month.[5] For those children in the summer sample who were away from home for some part of the month before the survey, the respondent was asked about the regular child care arrangements used during the weeks the child spent living at home.

It is important to note that in some areas of the country, the beginning and end of the survey field period overlapped with the regular school year. Children of respondents in the summer sample who were either beginning or ending their normal school year were omitted from the sample, and the remaining sample of children was reweighted.[6] Those children in the sample who were in summer school, however, were included in the analysis.

Because arranging child care during the summer is particularly challenging for ***working*** parents, and because the end of the school year has the greatest impact on the child care needs of school-age children, this analysis focuses on the child care patterns of 6- to 12-year-old children with ***employed*** primary caretakers.[7] This paper examines the child care arrangements that school-age children are in and total child care expenditures for families with school-age children.

Child Care Arrangements and Expenses Defined

Child Care Arrangements

While there are many ways to analyze the use of child care arrangements, the estimates presented here show the percentage of children using arrangements regularly, at least once a week in the past month, for any amount of time ***while the primary caretaker was working.*** For all children age 6 to 12, we also present the hours spent in different child care arrangements while their primary caretaker works.[8] Because children can be in more than one form of care while their primary caretaker is working, the percentages of children in care sum to more than 100 percent. In this analysis, those cases where arrangements are used by children while their employed primary caretakers are not working are not defined as child care.

We examine three categories of child care arrangements. The first set are the supervised arrangements that school-age children use during the summer, which include the following settings:

- summer school[9]
- before- and/or after-school programs[10]
- summer programs (such as day camps and summer recreation programs)
- family child care (care by a nonrelative in the provider's home)
- baby-sitter or nanny care (care by a nonrelative in the child's home)
- relative care (care by a relative in either the child's home or the provider's home).

We also combine the percentage of children using at least one of a subset of supervised arrangements into a category we call "organized programs," which includes summer school, summer programs, and before- and/or after-school care. Although children's experiences in these types of care vary, summer school, summer programs, and before- and/or after-school programs are particularly interesting because they may be more likely to provide organized activities and to be the target of youth development and academic enrichment strategies.

Second, we examine children in "self-care." The NSAF asks parents whether their child "regularly spent any time alone each week or stayed alone with a sibling younger than 13." Children whose primary caretakers respond "yes" to this question are defined as being in self-care.

Finally, the children of primary caretakers who do not report that the child is in a child care arrangement or self-care while they work are placed in the "parent/other care" category. For the children in this category, parents may be arranging their work schedules to avoid the use of nonparental care or using the lessons, clubs, and sports that their children are in as child care arrangements. In addition, because the NSAF focuses on *regular* child care arrangements, families that are patching together a series of child care arrangements for one- or two-week intervals also fall into this category.

Child Care Expenses

Child care expense data were also collected for all families with an employed primary caretaker. Caretakers who reported using one of the arrangements described above for their children while they worked were asked about their family's *total* expenses for all the arrangements used for their children while they were working.[11] Three measures are used to investigate expenditures: the percentage of families paying for care; the average monthly dollar amount paid for care; and the percentage of a family's earnings dedicated to child care.

Understanding the Data

A number of points are important to keep in mind when considering the arrangement and expenditure data presented here. First, the estimates presented represent the combined experiences of families with very different child care needs. The arrangement estimates, for example, include children from one- and two-parent families and families with different work schedules. The expenditure estimates include families using child care both full-time and part-time, as well as families of different sizes using different amounts of care. Therefore, a closer look at any specific subgroup may reveal a different pattern.

Second, these data simply show the choices that parents make; they do not indicate *why* parents choose the types of care they do or why they pay a given amount for care. The extent to which these findings reflect parental *preferences* (i.e., parents choosing the care option they prefer) or *constraints* (i.e., parents having no other option but to choose a specific form of care) is not known.

Third, during the summer months, many school-age children spend time away from home. These children may be away at camp, visiting a noncustodial parent, or visiting relatives. For those children who were away from home for some period of time in the month before the survey was conducted, we focus on the child care arrangements that were used for the time the child was at home.[12] At the end of the next section, we provide some information about where children are when they are away from home during the summer.

Fourth, these data are based on parental self-reports, and respondents may underreport behaviors that they feel are socially undesirable. This tendency may be relevant for our estimates of the percentage of children in self-care, because respondents may be reluctant to acknowledge that they regularly leave their children alone or with a sibling younger than 13 (O'Connell and Casper 1995).

Fifth, because the NSAF asks families to report only the portion of child care costs that they pay, expenditure estimates may not show the full cost of child care. Families whose care is fully subsidized by a government program or another person or organization are classified as having no child care costs. If a family pays only part of the cost of care (e.g., copayment for a subsidy), only the family's portion of the cost is considered.

Finally, summer patterns of care are dynamic and can vary from week to week for some families. This fact has implications for our estimates of summer child care, given the way the NSAF data were collected. As noted above, because the NSAF asked about arrangements that occurred "at least once a week in the past month," respondents using a complicated array of arrangements that would not qualify as "regular" would not be identified in this study as using child care. For example, children who are cared for by relatives one week and placed in a summer program the next are not identified by the survey as having a regular child care arrangement. In addition, because work and vacation schedules can cause child care patterns to vary from one month to another during the summer, it is important to note that the estimates presented here are the average of the monthly patterns over the entire summer, and may not be representative of any given summer month.

Summer Child Care Arrangements of School-Age Children with an Employed Primary Caretaker

During the school year, 90 percent of 6- to 12-year-old children are in school while their primary caretaker is working (table 1).[13] The end of the school year, therefore, creates a need for child care among working families with school-age children. In this section, we investigate how the end of the school year affects child care patterns. First we describe the arrangements that children use during the summer and the amount of time children spend in those arrangements. We then compare these summer patterns to school-year patterns. Additionally, because research has shown that the patterns of child care vary substantially depending on the age of the school-age child and family income (Capizzano et al. 2000; Smith 2000), we also separately examine changes in the arrangements used in the summer for school-age children of different ages and for children from families with different incomes.

School-Age Children (Age 6 to 12)

Supervised Arrangements

During the summer, almost one-third (30 percent) of school-age children are in at least one child care arrangement that can be defined as an *organized* program (a summer program, summer school, or a before- and/or after-school program) while the primary caretaker works.[14] Many children (24 percent) are placed in summer programs (figure 1). A smaller portion of children (6 percent) attend summer school, while few children are regularly in before- and/or after-school programs (2 percent). Among other arrangements, relatives play a significant role in caring for school-age children while primary caretakers work during the summer (34 percent), whereas the use of family child care and nannies and baby-sitters is less common (6 percent and 8 percent, respectively).

Table 1. Child Care Arrangements for School-Age Children (Age 6–12) with Employed Primary Caretakers,[a] by Season (1999)

	Summer (%)[b]	School Year (%)
School[c]	**NA**[d]	**90**
Supervised child care arrangements		
Organized programs[e]	**30**	**NA**
Summer program	**24**	**NA**
Summer school	**6**	**NA**
Before- and/or after-school care	**2**	**18**
Family child care	6	9
Nanny/baby-sitter	8	5
Relative care	34	25
Self-care	11	14
Parent/other care[f]	**30**	**7**

Source: Data from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF).

Notes: Estimates show the percentage of children using arrangements or self-care regularly, at least once a week in the past month, while the primary caretaker was working. Because some children are in more than one arrangement, percentages do not sum to 100. Standard errors are presented in appendix table B1. Bold indicates a statistically significant difference between school year and summer at the .10 level, or a seasonal shift in care to an arrangement that is only available in one of the seasons.

NA = not applicable.

a. Primary caretaker refers to the adult in the household most knowledgeable about the child.

b. Summer estimates are based on reports from interviews conducted with a nationally representative subsample of the NSAF, interviewed between June and September about child care arrangements in the past four weeks (see Data and Methods).

c. The percentage of children in regular school includes only those children in school while their primary caretaker works. Ninety-nine percent of children are in school regardless of caretaker activity.

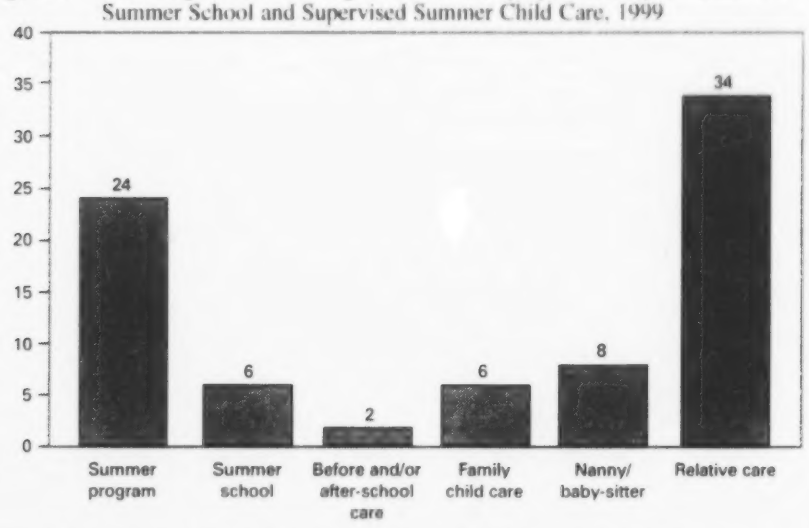
d. Not all settings are available during all seasons. Only children who were not in school were included in the summer sample (see Data and Methods). Children interviewed during the school year were not asked about summer school or summer programs.

e. Organized programs include summer school, before- and/or after-school programs, and summer programs. The percentage of children in organized programs does not equal the percentage of children in the separate programs because some children are in more than one of these arrangements.

f. The NSAF did not ask about regular enrichment activities, such as lessons or sports, that employed parents may use to care for their children while they work.

Comparing the use of *supervised* arrangements in the school year and the summer, we find two major differences (table 1). First, as noted above, we find that there is heavy reliance on summer programs that are not available during the school year. Also, we find that the percentage of children in before- and/or after-school programs is significantly smaller during the summer than in the school year (2 percent and 18 percent, respectively). Looking at the other forms of care, however, we find that the percentages of children in family child care and nanny/baby-sitter care do not change significantly across the time periods. In addition, while the percentage of chi

Figure 1. Percentage of Children Age 6–12 with Employed Primary Caretakers in Summer School and Supervised Summer Child Care, 1999



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families.
Note: Standard errors and sample sizes are presented in appendix table B1.

dren in relative care is 9 percentage points greater during the summer than in the school year, this difference is not statistically significant.

As one would expect, the *hours* that children spend in supervised arrangements during the summer months are quite different from the hours during the school year (table 2). Among children in relative care, for example, the average amount of time per week spent in this form of care increases from 13.9 hours during the school year to 23.2 hours during the summer. Children using other forms of supervised care[15] spend an average of 13 hours per week in these arrangements during the school year, compared with 22.8 hours during the summer. Finally, among the care arrangements not available during the school year, children spend, on average, 22.6 hours per week in summer programs and 18.8 hours in summer school each week.

Self-Care

Slightly more than one in ten 6- to 12-year-old children (11 percent) spend some regular time in self-care during the summer (figure 2), which is not significantly different from the percentage of children in self-care during the school year (14 percent). It is important to note that most families use self-care in addition to other supervised child care arrangements during the summer, such as relative care or summer programs. While 11 percent of children are in self-care, only 4 percent have self-care as their *only* arrangement while the primary caretaker works. Another way to look at self-care is to simply examine the percentage of children who regularly spend time in self-care—regardless of whether the primary caretaker is working during that time. Looking at self-care this way, we find that 12 percent of 6- to 12-year-old children are in self-care during the summer.

Table 2. Average Weekly Hours that School-Age Children (Age 6–12) with Employed Primary Caretakers' Spend in Supervised Nonparental Arrangements (1999)		
	Summer (%)[b]	School Year (%)
Summer school	**18.8**	**NA**
Child care arrangements		
Summer program	**22.6**	**NA**
Other supervised arrangements[c]	**23.2**	**13.9**
Relative care	**22.8**	**13.0**

Source: Data from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF).
Notes: Standard errors are presented in appendix table B2. Bold indicates a statistically significant difference between school year and summer at the .10 level, or a seasonal shift in care to arrangement that is only available in one of the seasons.
NA = not applicable.
a. Primary caretaker refers to the adult in the household most knowledgeable about the child.
b. Summer estimates are based on reports from interviews conducted with a nationally representative subsample of the NSAF, interviewed between June and September about child care arrangements in the past four weeks (see Data and Methods).
c. Other supervised arrangements include before- and/or after-school care, family child care, and nanny/baby-sitter care.

Like the supervised forms of care, while there is little change in the *percentage* of children regularly spending time in self-care during the summer, the ***amount of time*** children spend in self-care more than doubles. Indeed, children spend on average only 4.8 hours per week in self-care during the school year, compared with 10.3 hours during the summer (figure 2).

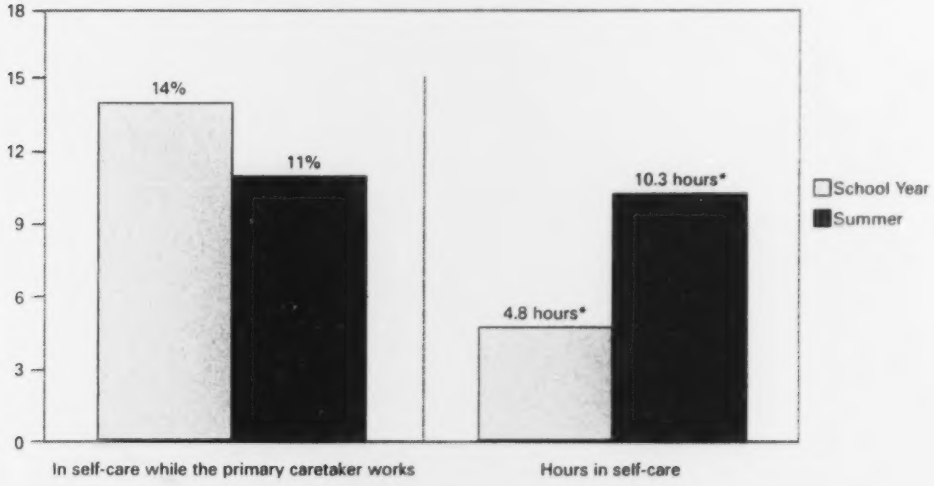
Parent/Other Care

The percentage of children in parent/other care increases from 7 percent in the school year to 30 percent during the summer (table 1). Parents of these children may be arranging their work schedules to avoid the use of nonparental care, or they may work at home. In addition, some of these children may be in activities not traditionally thought of as child care—lessons, clubs, or sports—while their primary caretaker works. This category may also be capturing children in families who are patching together a series of child care arrangements over the summer to care for their children.

When Children Are Away from Home

During the summer months, many children live away from home for some period of time, which obviates the need for child care. More than one-quarter (27 percent) of children age 6 to 12 spent at least one week away from home during the month before the survey. Among these children, the largest portion were spending time with a parent. A somewhat smaller share were spending time with other relatives, and a very small percentage were away at a summer camp.

Figure 2. Percentage of Children Age 6–12 with Employed Primary Caretakers in Self-Care and Hours Spent in Self-Care, by Season (1999)



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families.
Note: * indicates a statistically significant difference between school year and summer at the .10 level.
Standard errors and sample sizes are presented in appendix tables B1 and B2.

Children of Different Ages

The types of child care arrangements used by 6- to 12-year-old children with employed primary caretakers can vary substantially, depending on the age of the child. During the school year, for example, parents tend to rely more heavily on supervised child care arrangements for younger school-age children and are more likely to let older children care for themselves (Capizzano et al. 2000). For this reason, it is important to look at how summer child care arrangements differ for different age groups. Below, the summer child care arrangements of children with employed primary caretakers are examined separately for children age 6 to 9 and children age 10 to 12.

Supervised Child Care

Looking first at younger school-age children, we find that more than one-quarter (27 percent) of 6- to 9-year-olds are in some type of organized program during the summer. Twenty-four percent of 6- to 9-year-old children are in summer programs (such as day camps or recreation programs), while only 3 percent attend summer school and 2 percent are in before- and/or after-school programs (table 3). Relatives play the predominant role caring for 6- to 9-year-old children during the summer; 44 percent of these children are regularly in the care of relatives. A relatively small percentage of young children are in family child care (4 percent) and nanny/babysitter care (8 percent) during the summer. When comparing these percentages to those in the school year, we find a major increase in the use of relative care in the

Table 3. Child Care Arrangements for School-Age Children (Age 6–12) with Employed Primary Caretakers,[a] by Season and Age of Child (1999)

	Age 6–9		Age10–12	
	Summer (%)[b]	School Year (%)	Summer (%)	School Year (%)
School[c]	NA[d]	89+	NA[d]	91+
Supervised child care arrangements				
Organized programs[e]	27	NA	34	NA
Summer program	24	NA	24	NA
Summer school	3	NA	11	NA
Before- and/or after-school care	2	24+	2	11+
Family child care	4	12+	10	6+
Nanny/baby-sitter	8	6+	8	4+
Relative care	44+	27	17+	24
Self-care	1+	6+	28+	25+
Parent/other care[f]	28	8+	34	6+

Source: Data from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF).

Notes: Estimates show the percentage of children using arrangements or self-care regularly, at least once a week in the past month, while the primary caretaker was working. Because some children are in more than one arrangement, percentages do not sum to 100. Standard errors are presented in appendix table B3. Bold indicates a statistically significant difference between school year and summer at the .10 level, or a seasonal shift in care to an arrangement that is only available in one of the seasons. + indicates a statistically significant difference between 6- to 9-year-olds and 10- to 12-year-olds at the .10 level.

NA = not applicable.

a. Primary caretaker refers to the adult in the household most knowledgeable about the child.

b. Summer estimates are based on reports from interviews conducted with a nationally representative subsample of the NSAF, interviewed between June and September about child care arrangements in the past four weeks (see Data and Methods).

c. The percentage of children in regular school includes only those children in school while their primary caretaker works.

d. Not all settings are available during all seasons. Only children who were not in school were included in the summer sample (see Data and Methods). Children interviewed during the school year were not asked about summer school or summer programs.

e. Organized programs include summer school, before- and/or after-school programs, and summer programs. Percentage of children in organized programs does not equal percentage of children in these separate programs, because some children are in more than one of these arrangements.

f. The NSAF did not ask about regular enrichment activities, such as lessons or sports, that employed parents may use to care for their children while they work.

summer compared with the school year (44 percent versus 27 percent) and statistically significant decreases in the use of family child care and before- and/or after-school care.

Summer child care patterns look somewhat different for older children. More than a third of 10- to 12-year-olds (34 percent) are in an organized program setting during the summer, which is not significantly different from 6- to 9-year-olds. Twenty-four percent of 10- to 12-year-olds are in summer programs, 11 percent attend summer school, and 2 percent are in before- and/or after-school programs (table 3). However, only 17 percent of 10- to 12-year-olds are in relative care during the summer, which is a considerably smaller percentage than that of 6- to 9-year-

olds in relative care (44 percent). The percentages of 10- to 12-year-olds in family child care (10 percent) and in nanny/baby-sitter care (8 percent) are similar to the percentages of 6- to 9-year-olds in these arrangements. When comparing the summer and school-year child care arrangements of 10- to 12-year-olds, we find only one significant difference: The percentage of older children in before- and/or after-school programs is significantly lower during the summer than during the school year (2 percent versus 11 percent).

Self-Care

The use of self-care during the summer also varies for younger and older school-age children. Only 1 percent of 6- to 9-year-olds are in self-care during the summer. This percentage is significantly smaller than the 6 percent of children in this age range who are in self-care during the school year.

Ten- to twelve-year-olds are much more likely than younger children to be in self-care (table 3). Of these older children, 28 percent care for themselves regularly in the summer, a substantially larger proportion than the 1 percent of younger children in self-care. Older children are no more likely to be in self-care during the summer than in the school year (28 percent in the summer compared with 25 percent in the school year). It is important to note that although more than a quarter of 10- to 12-year-olds regularly care for themselves during the summer, most of these children use self-care in combination with a supervised arrangement like relative care or a summer day camp. About 1 in 10 (9 percent) of 10- to 12-year-olds are only in self-care while their primary caretaker works during the summer.

Parent/Other Care

Younger and older children are equally likely to be in parent/other care during the summer (28 percent and 34 percent, respectively). For both age groups, the use of parent/other care increases in the summer.

Children from Families with Different Incomes

Families with different incomes have been found to have different patterns of child care use. There are many potential reasons for this difference, including the fact that low-income families may face greater cost constraints than higher-income families, which may affect their choice of care. In addition, higher-income families may live in neighborhoods where they feel more comfortable leaving their children to care for themselves. These issues are of interest to policymakers, given concerns about helping low-income parents work and about the development and safety of low-income children. Below, we compare summer child care arrangements of children from families with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) and children from families at or above 200 percent of FPL.

Table 4. Child Care Arrangements for School-Age Children (Age 6–12) with Employed Primary Caretakers,[a] by Season and Family Income (1999)

	Below 200 Percent of FPL		200 Percent of FPL or Above	
	Summer (%)[b]	School Year (%)	Summer (%)	School Year (%)
School[c]	NA[d]	87+	NA[d]	91+
Supervised child care arrangements				
Organized programs[e]	34	NA	27	NA
Summer program	20	NA	26	NA
Summer school	14+	NA	2+	NA
Before- and/or after-school care	3	14+	1	21+
Family child care	5	8	7	10
Nanny/baby-sitter	4	6	11	5
Relative care	45	30+	27	23+
Self-care	5+	12+	15+	16+
Parent/other care[f]	27	9+	32	6+

Source: Data from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF).

Notes: Estimates show the percentage of children using arrangements or self-care regularly, at least once a week in the last month, while the primary caretaker was working. Because some children are in more than one arrangement, percentages do not sum to 100. Standard errors are presented in appendix table B4. Bold indicates a statistically significant difference between school year and summer at the .10 level, or a seasonal shift in care to an arrangement that is only available in one of the seasons. + indicates a statistically significant difference between low-income and higher-income at the .10 level.

NA = not applicable.

FPL = federal poverty level.

a. Primary caretaker refers to the adult in the household most knowledgeable about the child.

b. Summer estimates are based on reports from interviews conducted with a nationally representative subsample of the NSAF, interviewed between June and September about child care arrangements in the past four weeks (see Data and Methods).

c. The percentage of children in regular school includes only those children in school while their primary caretaker works.

d. Not all settings are available during all seasons. Only children who were not in school were included in the summer sample (see Data and Methods). Children interviewed during the school year were not asked about summer school or summer programs.

e. Organized programs include summer school, before- and/or after-school programs, and summer programs. Percentage of children in organized programs does not equal percentage of children in these separate programs because some children are in more than one of these arrangements.

f. The NSAF did not ask about regular enrichment activities, such as lessons or sports, that employed parents may use to care for their children while they work.

Supervised Arrangements

Among low-income children, more than a third (34 percent) are in an organized program during the summer (table 4). Twenty percent of low-income children are in summer programs, 14 percent attend summer school, and 3 percent use before- and/or after-school care while their primary caretaker works. Relatives play a large role in the care of low-income school-age children during the summer (45 percent), while a small percentage of these children use either family child care (5 percent) or nanny/baby-sitter care (4 percent). Comparing these percentages to the school year,

we find that the use of relatives increases significantly during the summer among low-income children (from 30 percent in the school year to 45 percent), while the percentage of children in before- and/or after-school programs decreases (from 14 percent in the school year to 3 percent).

The use of supervised arrangements is slightly different for higher-income children during the summer. Twenty-seven percent of higher-income children use at least one organized program, which is not significantly different from the proportion of low-income children. Among the individual organized programs, 26 percent of higher-income children are in summer programs, 2 percent are in summer school, and 1 percent are in before- and/or after-school programs. Only the percentage of higher-income children in summer school (2 percent) is significantly different from the proportion of low-income children (14 percent). Looking at the other forms of supervised care, we find that 7 percent of higher-income children are in family child care and 11 percent are in the care of a nanny/baby-sitter. These percentages are not significantly different from the percentages of low-income children in these arrangements. Also, while a much smaller percentage of higher-income children are in relative care (27 percent) compared with low-income children (45 percent), this difference is not statistically significant. When comparing the supervised summer and school-year child care arrangements of higher-income children, we find little change across the seasons. Only the percentage of higher-income children in before- and/or after-school programs is significantly different during the summer and the school year (1 percent in the summer compared with 21 percent in the school year).

Self-Care

Five percent of low-income children are in self-care during the summer, which is significantly lower than the percentage in self-care during the school year (12 percent). Of that 5 percent, roughly half use self-care in combination with one of the supervised arrangements described above. Only 3 percent of low-income children use self-care exclusively during the summer while their primary caretakers work.

Fifteen percent of higher-income children are in self-care while their primary caretakers work, which is three times greater than the proportion of low-income children (5 percent). Unlike low-income children, the percentage of higher-income children in self-care does not change significantly from the school year (16 percent). Most higher-income children are in self-care in addition to a supervised arrangement. Five percent of higher-income children are in *only* self-care during the summer while their primary caretakers work.

Parent/Other Care

The percentage of low-income children in parent/other care during the summer is similar to the percentage of higher-income children (27 percent and 32 percent, respectively). The use of parent/other care increases from the school year to the summer for both income groups.

The Costs of Child Care for Children during the Summer

For working families with children, child care expenses can consume a significant portion of the family budget. In 1997, for example, working families with children under 13 spent, on average, 9 percent of their monthly earnings on child care during the non-summer months (Giannarelli and Barsimantov 2000). Because child care arrangements change from the school year to the summer for children of working parents, it is important to examine the extent to which child care expenses are affected.

This section analyzes how family child care expenditures change between the school year and summer for employed families with school-age children.[16] We compare the percentage of families who pay for child care and the amount they pay for care (in dollars and as a percentage of earnings) in the school year and summer. Although we limit this analysis to families with school-age children, it is important to note that the estimates presented in this section are based on the child care expenses of ***all*** children in the family, not only the school-age child.

Among working families with school-age children, 41 percent pay for child care during the summer (table 5). Of these families who pay, average monthly expenses are $297 for all the children in the family. This amount represents the average amount paid across all types of families—single and two-parent as well as low- and higher-income. On average, the families who pay for care spend 8 percent of their earnings on child care during the summer. Surprisingly, summer child care expenses are not significantly different from those during the school year. Forty-three percent of families pay for child care during the school year, and those that pay spend on average $266, or 8 percent of family earnings.

However, looking at families with different income levels reveals different child care expenditure patterns. While the percentage of families paying for child care during the summer is roughly the same (44 percent of low-income families and 40 percent of higher-income families), the average expenses are significantly different. Among the low-income families who pay for care, the average monthly expense was $170, or 11 percent of earnings. Higher-income families who pay for care spend, on average, more than twice that amount—$377 per month, but only 7 percent of earnings.

Comparing school-year child care expenses and summer expenses for each of these groups also reveals interesting patterns (figure 3). Neither the percentage of low-income families nor the percentage of higher-income families ***paying*** for care changes significantly from the school year to the summer (37 percent of low-income families and 45 percent of higher-income families pay for care during the school year). However, the average expense among low-income families who pay for care is significantly lower in the summer ($170) than in the school year ($224), and they pay less as a percentage of earnings in the summer than in the school year (11 percent and 14 percent, respectively). Conversely, the average monthly expense among higher-income families who pay for care increases from school year to summer ($282 during the school year compared with $377 in the summer). This increase, however,

Table 5. Child Care Expenses for Working Families with at Least One Child Age 6–12, by Season and Family Income

	Summer[a]	School Year
All families with school-age children		
Paying for child care (%)	41	43
Monthly expenses (for those who pay) ($)	297	265
Percentage of earnings (for those who pay) (%)	8	8
Sample size (all families)	*554*	*9,432*
Sample size (families paying for care)	*230*	*3,970*
Income as a percentage of FPL		
Below 200 percent of FPL		
Paying for child care (%)	44	37+
Monthly expenses (for those who pay) ($)	**170+**	**223+**
Percentage of earnings (for those who pay) (%)	**11+**	**14+**
Sample size (all families)	*243*	*3,074*
Sample size (families paying for care)	*89*	*1,171*
200 percent of FPL and above		
Paying for child care (%)	40	45+
Monthly expenses (for those who pay) ($)	**377+**	**281+**
Percentage of earnings (for those who pay) (%)	7+	6+
Sample size (all families)	*311*	*6,358*
Sample size (families paying for care)	*141*	*2,799*

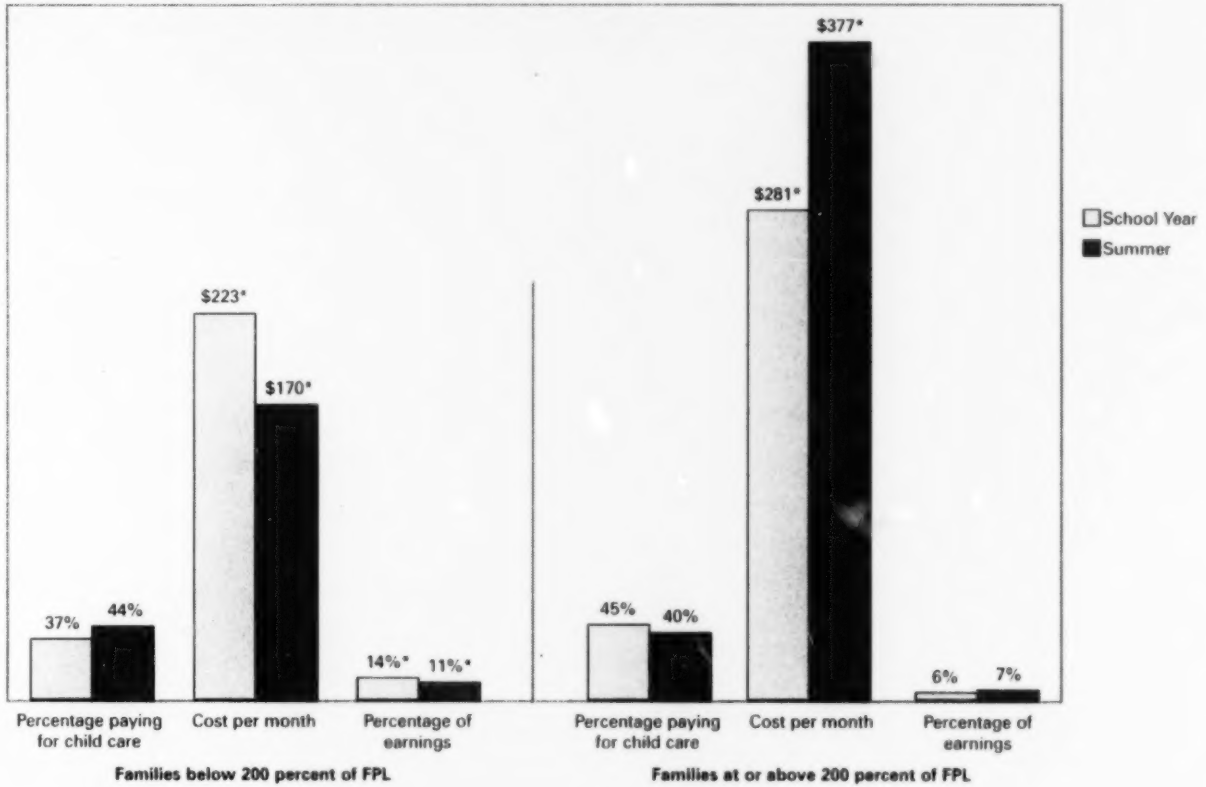
Source: Data from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF).
Notes: Although the analysis is limited to families with school-age children, the cost estimates presented are based on the child care expenses of all children in the family, not only the school-age child. Standard errors are presented in appendix table B5. Estimates show the percentage of children using each arrangement for any amount of time. Bold indicates a statistically significant difference between summer and school year at the .10 level, or a seasonal shift in care to an arrangement that is only available in one of the seasons. + indicates a statistically significant difference between low-income and higher-income families at the .10 level.
FPL = federal poverty level.
a. Summer estimates are based on reports from interviews conducted with a nationally representative subsample of the NSAF interviewed between June and September about child care arrangements in the past four weeks.

does not represent a larger percentage of higher-income families' earnings; the percentage of earnings spent on child care does not differ significantly from school year to summer (6 percent and 7 percent, respectively).

Conclusion

This paper outlines a number of significant changes that take place from the school year to the summer months in the child care patterns of America's families. A number of interesting findings have emerged.

Figure 3. Child Care Spending Patterns of Low- and Higher-Income Families, by Season (1999)



Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families.
Note: * indicates a statistically significant difference between school year and summer at the .10 level.
FPL = federal poverty level.
Standard errors and sample sizes presented in appendix table B5.

Child Care Arrangements

Supervised Care

Supervised child care arrangements play a large role in the care of children during the summer. Families rely heavily on organized programs such as recreational programs and day camps, with approximately 6 million[17] children in these forms of care during the summer months. Among the various organized programs, summer programs are used most commonly; summer school provides a supervised setting for a small percentage of children. In addition, relatives play a large role in caring for all children during the summer.

Overall, we do not see a significant increase in the percentage of children using the supervised arrangements that are available during both the school year and the summer (relative care, family child care, nannies/baby-sitters, and before- and/or after-school programs). Among both younger children and low-income children, however, we see a dramatic increase in relative care during the summer months.

Not surprisingly, we do see significant increases in the ***amount of time*** children spend in these arrangements. Indeed, children spend, on average, roughly 10 more hours per week in both relative care and the other supervised arrangements during the summer than during the school year.

Finally, certain populations seem to rely more heavily than others on specific supervised child care arrangements during the summer. Young children, for example, are more likely than older children to be placed in the care of relatives during the summer, and low-income children are more likely than higher-income children to be in summer school.

Self-Care

One would expect that the percentage of school-age children in self-care while their primary caretaker works would increase during the summer months. With so many more hours of child care needed because of the end of the school year and school-age child care in short supply in some areas, it would seem likely that more families would rely on self-care during the summer. But the use of self-care among younger children and low-income children seems to decrease slightly during the summer months and remains constant for the other groups. Furthermore, a smaller percentage of the children who care for themselves are in self-care *exclusively* in the summer while their primary caretakers work.

Nonetheless, self-care remains a serious issue for school-age children during the summer months. Like the pattern in the school year, a sizable percentage of children (11 percent) regularly spend time alone or with a sibling younger than 13 during the summer, and a larger percentage of higher-income children are in self-care (15 percent). Approximately 2.2 million[18] children are in self-care while the primary caretaker is working. Children who are in self-care over the summer spend, on average, 10.3 hours in self-care each week—6 more hours per week caring for themselves than

during the school year. Finally, the number of children in self-care during the summer regardless of whether the primary caretaker is working during that time is 2.4 million.

Parent/Other Care

While many parents choose to find regular child care arrangements during the summer to supplant the hours their child is in school, it seems that many parents also do not regularly use any of the arrangements analyzed in this paper during the summer. During the summer months, the percentage of children whose primary caretaker did not report regular arrangements increased substantially.

A number of factors may explain this increase. First, because the NSAF focused on the use of *regular* child care arrangements during the summer, the survey may not capture families that are stringing together a series of arrangements—one- or two-week camps, visits to relatives, and vacations from work—that would not fall under the definition of "regular." In addition, more parents may take their children to work, work at home, or arrange work shifts with their spouses to avoid the need for child care during summer months.

Child Care Expenses

One would expect that child care expenses would increase during the summer months. Indeed, because school is not in session to cover the hours that parents work, many parents who cannot find free care to replace the hours spent in school may pay more for child care during the summer. We find an interesting seasonal pattern relating to child care costs. While *overall* we find no change in the percentage of families paying for care or in average monthly child care expenses, we do find significant changes among low- and higher-income families. Surprisingly, we find that low-income families, on average, spend *less* on child care during the summer than during the school year ($170 compared with $224). Higher-income families follow a more expected trend; the average amount spent is significantly higher during the summer.

This trend in costs among low-income families may be the result of an increase in *paid* relative care during the summer. Among low-income families *paying for care*, a larger percentage use relative care during the summer than during the school year. Relative care is generally less expensive than other forms of care and may account for this decrease in average costs.

Implications

These findings hold important implications for both researchers and policymakers. Researchers, for example, need to consider the seasonal patterns of child care when calculating and presenting child care estimates. Surveys with long field periods that cut across seasons are combining two very different patterns of child care, which can bias the true estimates of child care.

Policymakers must also be aware of these seasonal patterns. When school is not in session, child care patterns and the costs of care change for working families. When the school year ends, these families face new and difficult decisions about how to care for their school-age children while they work. These decisions are made within a different child care environment, which includes a different array of child care options. Child care policies, therefore, should consider this dynamic nature of child care, as well as the different options for and constraints on parents during the summer and the school year.

Even though most children are in a form of supervised child care during the summer (nearly three-quarters of all school-age children with employed primary caretakers) for a substantial number of hours each week, a significant percentage of children regularly spend time in self-care each week during the summer. While the percentage of children is not significantly different from the school-year percentage, they do spend a significantly longer amount of time in self-care during the summer. This trend is important to note, given that lack of supervision can put children at greater risk of physical injury and psychological and emotional harm.

Finally, little is known about the quality of summer child care, specifically those programs available only during the summer. Accordingly, given the large proportion of children using organized programs during the summer, examining the quality of summer child care programs and the relationship between the use and quality of these programs and their impact on school-age children is extremely important.

Appendix 1: Child Care Patterns of School-Age Children with Nonemployed Primary Caretakers

Children with primary caretakers who are *not* employed may also be placed in child care arrangements on a regular basis. For example, parents may use child care in order to take classes or to provide enrichment activities for their children. While the main body of this paper focuses on child care arrangements used while the primary caretaker is working, this appendix briefly presents a comparison of the school year and summer activities and arrangements used by children age 6 to 12 whose primary caretaker is not employed.[19]

Supervised Arrangements

During the school year, nearly all 6- to 12-year-old children with nonemployed primary caretakers regularly spend time in school each week (98 percent) (table A1). Although school is not available in the summer, the use of supervised nonparental arrangements does not shift significantly. Similar to the pattern in the school year, relative care is the most common form of supervised care for children with nonemployed primary caretakers during the summer (25 percent), while small percentages of children are in before- and/or after-school care (3 percent), nanny/baby-sitter care (3 percent), and family child care (2 percent). As for arrangements not available during the school year, 12 percent of children are in summer programs, and 6 percent attend summer school.

Self-Care

There is little change in the use of self-care from the school year to the summer. Relatively small percentages of children of nonemployed parents are in self-care during both the school year and the summer (8 percent and 7 percent, respectively).

Parent/Other Care

During the summer, a large percentage of children with nonemployed primary caretakers do not regularly use any of the supervised child care arrangements analyzed

Table A1. Child Care Arrangements for School-Age Children (Age 6–12) with Nonemployed Primary Caretakers,[a] by Season (1999)

	Summer (%)[b]	School Year (%)
School	NA[c]	98
Supervised child care arrangements		
Summer program	**12**	**NA**
Summer school	**6**	**NA**
Before- and/or after-school care	3	9
Family child care	2	3
Nanny/baby-sitter	3	4
Relative care	25	15
Self-care	7	8
Parent/other care[d]	**58**	**1**

Source: Data from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF).

Notes: Estimates show the percentage of children using arrangements or self-care regularly, at least once a week in the past month, regardless of primary caretaker's activity. Because some children are in more than one arrangement, percentages do not sum to 100. Standard errors are presented in appendix table B6. Bold indicates a statistically significant difference between school year and summer at the .10 level, or a seasonal shift in care to arrangement that is only available in one of the seasons.

NA = not applicable.

a. Primary caretaker refers to the adult in the household most knowledgeable about the child.

b. Summer estimates are based on reports from interviews conducted with a nationally representative subsample of the NSAF, interviewed between June and September about child care arrangements in the past four weeks (see Data and Methods).

c. Not all settings are available during all seasons. Only children who were not in school were included in the summer sample (see Data and Methods). Children interviewed during the school year were not asked about summer school or summer programs.

d. The NSAF did not ask about regular enrichment activities, such as lessons or sports, that employed parents may use to care for their children while they work.

here or self-care. During the summer, 58 percent of children are in the parent care/other category. It is likely that this percentage is so high because child care is often not a necessity for families with a nonemployed primary caretaker, and therefore many families do not find activities to replace school during the summer.

Appendix 2: Child Care Patterns of Preschool Children with Employed Primary Caretakers

Child care patterns and expenses for preschool children may also change during the summer months. Like parents of older children, parents of preschoolers face different child care options in the summer. Many child care centers and preschools close during the summer, and vacation plans of informal providers may disrupt regular child care arrangements. Teenage siblings, no longer in school, also become available to watch younger children. Therefore, investigating the summer child care patterns of children not yet in school is important.

School-Year Versus Summer Child Care Arrangements

To understand child care changes for preschool children during the summer, we compared school-year and summer arrangements for infants and toddlers (children under 3) and 3- and 4-year-olds, as well as preschool children from low- and higher-income families (table A2). For the analysis of these children, we examined the use of center-based care (care in child care centers, Head Start, preschool and prekindergarten) in addition to the arrangements examined for school-age children.

Overall, there are few differences in child care patterns of preschool children between the school year and the summer. Children under 5 are less likely to be in center-based care during the summer than during the school year (32 percent during the school year and 23 percent during the summer), and the use of nannies and baby-sitters also falls (7 percent during the school year to 3 percent during the summer). Summer programs do not play a large role in caring for children under 5 (1 percent), and the percentage of children in the other arrangements does not change significantly.

Looking at children under 5 by age and income reveals other changes in child care patterns from school year to summer. For example, the use of center-based care among 3- and 4-year-olds falls by nearly half from school year to summer (50 percent in the school year and 28 percent in the summer). Interestingly, the use of center-based care among children under 3 does not change (19 percent during the school year and 20 percent during the summer). This dramatic decline among 3- and 4-year-olds is most likely caused by the closure of prekindergarten programs during the summer. The percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds in parent care increases during the summer (22 percent during the school year and 39 percent during the summer).

Table A2. Child Care Arrangements for Children Age 0–4 with Employed Primary Caretakers,[a] by Season and Selected Characteristics (1999)

	Summer (%)[b]	School Year (%)
All children		
Supervised child care arrangements		
Center-based child care	**23**	**32**
Summer program	**1**	**NA**
Family child care	21	17
Nanny/baby-sitter	**3**	**7**
Relative care	27	33
Parent care	35	28
Child's age		
Younger than 3 years		
Supervised child care arrangements		
Center-based child care	20	19+
Summer program	**<1**	**NA**
Family child care	26	18
Nanny/baby-sitter	**1**	**8**
Relative care	**22+**	**35**
Parent care	34	32
3- and 4-year-olds		
Supervised child care arrangements		
Center-based child care	**28**	**50+**
Summer program	**3**	**NA**
Family child care	8	5
Nanny/baby-sitter	37	31
Relative care	10+	16
Parent care	**39**	**22**
Income as a percentage of FPL		
Below 200 percent of FPL		
Supervised child care arrangements		
Center-based child care	**18**	**27+**
Summer program	**<1**	**NA**
Family child care	**8**	**14**
Nanny/baby-sitter	7	5
Relative care	42	36
Parent care	41	34
200 percent of FPL and above		
Supervised child care arrangements		
Center-based child care	25	35+
Summer program	**1**	**NA**
Family child care	27	19
Nanny/baby-sitter	**2**	**7**
Relative care	**19**	**32**
Parent care	32	25

Source: Data from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF).

Notes: Standard errors are presented in appendix table B7. Estimates show the percentage of children using each arrangement for any amount of time. Because some children are in more than one arrangement, percentages do not sum to 100. Bold indicates a statistically significant difference between summer and school year at the .10 level, or a seasonal shift in care to arrangement that is only available in one of the seasons. + indicates a statistically significant difference between younger and older children or low-income and higher-income families at the .10 level

NA = not applicable.

FPL = federal poverty level.

a. Primary caretaker refers to the adult in the household most knowledgeable about the child.

b. Summer estimates are based on reports from interviews conducted with a nationally representative subsample of the NSAF, interviewed between June 13 and September 26 about child care arrangements in the past four weeks.

Table A3. Summer[a] Child Care Arrangements of Children Age 5 with Employed Primary Caretakers,[b] 1999 (%)	
Supervised child care arrangements	
Summer school	2
Center-based care	23
Summer program	3
Relative care	24
Family child care	13
Nanny/baby-sitter	16
Self-care	<1
Parent/other care[c]	33

Source: Data from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF).
Notes: Standard errors are presented in appendix table B8. Estimates show the percentage of children using each arrangement for any amount of time. Because some children are in more than one arrangement, percentages do not sum to 100.
a. Summer estimates are based on reports from interviews conducted with a nationally representative subsample of the NSAF, interviewed between June and September about child care arrangements in the past four weeks.
b. Primary caretaker refers to the adult in the household most knowledgeable about the child.
c. The NSAF did not ask about regular enrichment activities, such as lessons or sports, that employed parents may use to care for their children while they work.

Children under 3 are less likely to be in either relative care or nanny/baby-sitter care in the summer, while the use of these arrangements does not change significantly for 3- and 4-year-olds.

Among low- and higher-income families, we find that low-income children are less likely to be in center-based care (27 percent during the school year and 18 percent during the summer) and in family child care (14 percent versus 8 percent) during the summer than the school year. Children under 5 in higher-income families are less likely to use nannies and baby-sitters (7 percent in the school year versus 2 percent in the summer) or relative care (32 percent versus 19 percent).

5-year-olds

Depending on school districts and birthdates, some 5-year-olds are already in school while others have not started, making them difficult to group with either school-age or preschool children. Therefore, we consider them separately for this analysis (table A3). Among the arrangements analyzed here, relative care is the most common summer arrangement for 5-year-olds with working primary caretakers (24 percent of

Table A4. Child Care Expenses for Working Families with Children Age 0–4 (1999)		
	Summer[a]	School Year
Paying for child care (%)	57	57
Monthly expenses (for those who pay) ($)	297	358
Percentage of earnings (for those who pay)	9	11
Sample size (all families)	*397*	*6,806*
Sample size (families paying for care)	*215*	*3,941*

Source: Data from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF).
Notes: Standard errors are presented in appendix table B9. Estimates show the percentage of children using each arrangement for any amount of time.
a. Summer estimates are based on reports from interviews conducted with a nationally representative subsample of the NSAF interviewed between June and September about child care arrangements in the past four weeks.

children are in relative care). Similarly, a sizable portion (23 percent) of 5-year-olds are in center-based care while their primary caretaker works. Nanny and baby sitter care is more common for 5-year-olds than for any other age group in the summer (16 percent). Only a small percentage of 5-year-olds (3 percent) are in summer programs while their primary caretakers work.

Child Care Expenses for Families with Preschool Children

The child care expenses for families with preschool children do not change, on average, from the school year to the summer (table A4).[20] Families with preschool children are just as likely to have child care expenses during the summer as they are during the school year (57 percent in both cases). In addition, the average monthly amount paid for care ($358 in the school year versus $297 in the summer) and the percentage of earnings spent on child care (11 percent in the school year and 9 percent in the summer) are not statistically different.

Appendix 3: Tables

Table B1. Child Care Arrangements for School-Age Children (Age 6–12) with Employed Primary Caretakers, by Season (1999)—Standard Errors and Sample Sizes

	Summer		School Year	
	SE	*N*	SE	*N*
School	NA	NA	0.52	9,175
Supervised child care arrangements				
Organized programs	3.26	452		
Summer program	3.26	450	NA	NA
Summer school	2.75	451	NA	NA
Before-/after-school care	0.59	452	0.61	9,163
Family child care	2.06	452	0.44	9,168
Nanny/baby-sitter	3.00	451	0.44	9,154
Relative care	5.67	452	0.93	9,177
Self-care	3.03	443	0.60	9,163
Parent/other care	3.85	452	1.03	9,177

Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families.
NA = not applicable.

Table B2. Average Weekly Hours that Children (Age 6–12) with Employed Primary Caretakers Spend in Supervised Child Care Arrangements and Self-Care—Standard Errors and Sample Sizes

	Summer		School Year	
	SE	*N*	SE	*N*
Summer school	5.56	34	NA	NA
Supervised child care arrangements				
Summer program	2.15	107	NA	NA
Other supervised arrangements	2.90	86	0.43	2,788
Relative care	3.31	146	0.44	2,222
Self-care	2.14	51	0.205	1,403

Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families.
NA = not applicable.

Table B3. Child Care Arrangements for School-Age Children (Age 6–12) with Employed Primary Caretakers, by Season and Child's Age (1999)—Standard Errors and Sample Sizes

	Summer		School Year	
	SE	*N*	SE	*N*
6- to 9-year-olds				
School	NA	NA	0.52	9,175
Supervised child care arrangements				
Summer program	4.85	266	NA	NA
Summer school	1.04	267	NA	NA
Before-/after-school care	0.54	267	1.03	5,355
Family child care	1.45	267	0.82	5,356
Nanny/baby-sitter	3.17	267	0.67	5,349
Relative care	7.14	267	1.12	5,361
Self-care	0.51	264	0.54	5,356
Parent/other care	5.50	267	1.12	5,361
10- to 12-year-olds				
School	NA	NA	0.89	3,816
Supervised child care arrangements				
Summer program	5.28	184	NA	NA
Summer school	6.37	184	NA	NA
Before-/after-school care	1.26	185	0.79	3,808
Family child care	4.93	185	0.50	3,812
Nanny/baby-sitter	6.80	184	0.51	3,805
Relative care	4.18	185	1.48	3,816
Self-care	6.21	179	1.31	3,807
Parent/other care	5.50	185	1.54	3,816

Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families.
NA = not applicable.

Table B4. Child Care Arrangements for School-Age Children (Age 6–12) with Employed Primary Caretakers, by Season and Family Income (1999)—Standard Errors and Sample Sizes

	Summer		School Year	
Below 200 percent of FPL	**SE**	***N***	**SE**	***N***
Supervised child care arrangements				
Summer program	6.87	190	1.22	2,906
Summer school	1.38	191	1.24	2,902
Before-/after-school care	5.69	191	NA	NA
Family child care	8.51	191	1.52	2,908
Nanny/baby-sitter	3.73	191	0.93	2,904
Relative care	1.68	191	0.78	2,902
Self-care	1.98	187	1.03	2,902
Parent/other care	5.89	191	1.75	2,908
200 percent of FPL and above				
Supervised child care arrangements				
School	0.56	261	0.62	6,269
Before-/after-school care	0.42	261	0.83	6,261
Summer program	4.97	259	NA	NA
Relative care	7.66	261	1.10	6,269
Family child care	2.43	261	0.53	6,264
Nanny/baby-sitter	4.62	260	0.48	6,252
Self-care	4.37	256	0.78	6,261
Parent/other care	5.53	261	1.24	6,269

Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families.
NA = not applicable.
FPL = federal poverty level.

Table B5. Child Care Expenses for Working Families with School-Age Children, by Season and Selected Characteristics (1999)—Standard Errors and Sample Sizes

	Summer		School Year	
	SE	*N*	SE	*N*
All families with school-age children				
Paying for child care (%)	4.35	544	0.93	9,288
Monthly expenses (for those who pay) ($)	26.67	230	6.02	3,970
Percentage of earnings (for those who pay)	0.978	229	0.299	3,962
Income as a percentage of FPL				
Below 200 percent of FPL				
Paying for child care (%)	5.57	241	1.35	3,034
Monthly expenses (for those who pay) ($)	18.59	89	9.94	1,171
Percentage of earnings (for those who pay)	1.418	88	0.761	1,166
200 percent of FPL and above				
Paying for child care (%)	5.69	303	1.11	6,254
Monthly expenses (for those who pay) ($)	37.24	141	6.95	2,799
Percentage of earnings (for those who pay)	1.175	141	0.254	2,796

Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families.
FPL = federal poverty level.

Table B6. Child Care Arrangements for School-Age Children (Age 6–12) with Nonemployed Primary Caretakers, by Season (1999)—Standard Errors and Sample Sizes

	Summer		School Year	
	SE	*N*	SE	*N*
School	NA	NA	1.00	9,175
Supervised child care arrangements				
Summer program	4.72	195	NA	NA
Summer school	2.48	190	NA	NA
Before-/after-school care	3.83	195	0.84	3,475
Family child care	0.78	194	0.39	3,478
Nanny/baby-sitter	1.73	195	0.49	3,477
Relative care	8.70	195	1.15	3,481
Self-care	4.12	192	0.94	3,474
Parent/other care	8.86	195	0.73	3,481

Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families.
NA = not applicable.

Table B7. Child Care Arrangements for Children Age 0–4 with Employed Primary Caretakers, by Season and Selected Characteristics (1999)

	Summer		School Year	
	SE	*N*	SE	*N*
All children				
Supervised child care arrangements				
Center-based child care	5.40	380	1.07	6,387
Summer program	0.62	380	NA	NA
Family child care	8.78	380	0.75	6,408
Nanny/baby-sitter	1.47	380	0.58	6,392
Relative care	4.94	380	1.06	6,418
Parent care	6.86	380	1.11	6,418
Child's age				
Younger than 3 years				
Supervised child care arrangements				
Center-based child care	7.81	200	1.34	3,489
Summer program	0.04	200	NA	NA
Family child care	12.57	200	1.00	3,506
Nanny/baby-sitter	0.42	200	0.98	3,493
Relative care	6.02	200	1.43	3,511
Parent care	9.46	200	1.52	3,511
3- and 4-year-olds				
Supervised child care arrangements				
Center-based child care	4.63	180	1.37	2,898
Summer program	1.98	180	NA	NA
Family child care	3.81	180	1.17	2,902
Nanny/baby-sitter	4.19	180	0.62	2,899
Relative care	7.28	180	1.51	2,907
Parent care	7.94	180	1.34	2,907
Income as a percentage of FPL				
Below 200 percent of FPL				
Supervised child care arrangements				
Center-based child care	4.03	166	1.38	2,173
Summer program	0.20	166	NA	NA
Family child care	2.96	166	1.24	2,183
Nanny/baby-sitter	4.07	166	0.78	2,177
Relative care	8.53	166	2.04	2,187
Parent care	8.83	166	1.99	2,187
200 percent of FPL and above				
Supervised child care arrangements				
Center-based child care	7.93	214	1.27	4,214
Summer program	0.93	214	NA	NA
Family child care	12.54	214	0.98	4,225
Nanny/baby-sitter	0.55	214	0.83	4,215
Relative care	5.44	214	1.03	4,231
Parent care	8.83	214	1.20	4,231

Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families.
NA = not applicable.
FPL = federal poverty level.

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Table B8. Summer Child Care Arrangements of Children Age 5 with Employed Primary Caretakers (1999) (%)—Standard Error and Sample Size		
	SE	N
Supervised child care arrangements		
Summer school	1.27	96
Center-based care	6.00	95
Summer program	1.63	96
Relative care	9.94	96
Family child care	6.85	96
Nanny/baby-sitter	10.67	96
Self-care	0.26	96
Parent/other care	10.23	96

Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families.

Table B9. Child Care Expenses for Working Families with Children Age 0–4 by Season—Standard Errors and Sample Sizes				
	Summer		School Year	
	SE	N	SE	N
Children's ages				
Families with school-age children				
Paying for child care (%)	6.51	388	1.07	6,685
Monthly expenses (for those who pay) ($)	41.95	215	8.65	3,941
Percentage of earnings (for those who pay)	1.105	215	0.284	3,930

Source: Urban Institute calculations from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families.

Notes

1. For example, some research indicates that children can either fall behind or make gains academically during the summer, which may depend on their summer activities (see, e.g., Entwisle and Alexander 1992).

2. The National Survey of America's Families is a survey of more than 42,000 households, representative of the noninstitutionalized civilian population of persons under age 65 in the nation as a whole. The survey focuses primarily on health care, income support, job training, child care, and receipt of social services.

3. In this paper, "primary caretaker" refers to the respondent who is identified as the "Most Knowledgeable Adult" for the focal child. The mother of the child was the primary caretaker for 73 percent of the children in our sample; the father was the primary caretaker for 23 percent of the sample. Most of the remaining 4 percent of primary caretakers are grandparents, aunt and uncles, and unrelated foster parents. For more information on NSAF survey methods, including the Most Knowledgeable Adult, see Kenney, Scheuren, and Wang 1999.

4. Our sample includes 9,629 children between the ages of 6 and 12 (452 children whose parent was interviewed about summer child care; 9,177 children whose parent was interviewed about school-year child care). Nearly 20 percent of the school-year sample was interviewed during the summer months but asked about child care during the month of May. See endnote 8 in Sonenstein et al. 2002 for more details.

5. The summer field period lasted from June 13 through September 26. Ninety percent of the families were interviewed between June 20 and September 4.

6. Because of differing lengths of the school year across the country, some respondents in our summer field period were asked about child care either before their child's regular school year had ended or after it began. Because the focus of the paper is to understand child care patterns when the regular school year is not in session, children whose primary caretaker was asked about child care while the child was attending school during the regular school year were omitted from the summer sample. One hundred fifteen 5- to 12-year-olds (8 percent of the 5- to 12-year-olds in the sample) were dropped. The remaining children were weighted to adjust the sample for the demographic and household characteristics lost by the omission of these children (specifically family income, mother's race, and location of household).

7. The summer child care arrangements of school-age children with primary caretakers who are not employed, as well as the summer arrangements of preschool children with employed primary caretakers, are also of interest to researchers and policymakers. Therefore, in appendix I we present data on summer care arrangements for school-age children whose primary caretakers are not employed, and in appendix II we present data on summer child care arrangements and costs for children under 6 with employed primary caretakers.

8. Because of the sample sizes of children in each specific form of care, we can only present an analysis of the hours spent in care for all children age 6 to 12, and not for children of different ages and incomes.

9. The NSAF survey instrument allowed us to distinguish whether children were in regular school or summer school. For this paper, when discussing "school" in the context of the school year, we mean that which is mandatory for most children. "School" during the summer refers to summer school programs that school districts provide while regular school is not in session for children who need to make up coursework, want enrichment, or want a head start on the next year.

10. Before- and after-school programs are designed to care for children before and after the school day. These programs are often located in schools, community centers, and youth development agencies. During the summer, these programs are used primarily among the children who attend summer school.

11. We use the Current Population Survey definition of subfamily in this paper to define "family." In some cases, two focal children in a household had different primary caretakers. In cases where each caretaker-child pair was in a separate subfamily, we analyzed the pairs as separate families. In cases where two caretakers were related by marriage or were domestic partners, we treated those records as one observation.

12. A very small percentage of children were not at home for any of the four weeks before the survey (1 percent). Because no child care data were obtained for these children, they were omitted from the analysis.

13. Calculation from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families. Overall, 99 percent of school-age children with employed parents are in school each week. For 9 percent of these children, however, the employed primary caretaker worked hours outside the regular school day.

14. Because some children are in more than one organized activity, the percentages of children in each type of organized activity add to more than 30 percent.

15. Other supervised arrangements include before- or after-school programs, family child care homes, and nanny or baby-sitter care.

16. Employed families refers to families with a working primary caretaker.

17. The confidence interval around this estimate is +/- 1.6 million children at the 95 percent confidence level.

18. The confidence interval around this estimate is +/- 1.2 million at the 95 percent confidence level.

19. The child care estimates presented in the main body of the paper are those used by the primary caretaker while he or she is working. Because here we are examining children of primary caretakers who are not employed, the estimates presented in this appendix include the use of child care for any purpose.

20. These estimates include families with only preschool children and with preschool children and school-age children. Therefore, some families are included in these estimates that are also included in the expense numbers in the text of the paper.

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